



IAN ALAN PAUL 2017-01-31

10 PRELIMINARY THESES ON RESISTANCE

NONPOLITICS CLASS STRUGGLE, NEGATIVITY, RESISTANCE, RIOT

1. Resistance against Trump will first become manifest in radical acts of negation.

Sabotage this. Slow down that. Undermine a process. Raise questions. Draw lines. Flood systems. Destroy records. Overwhelm institutions. Withdraw your consent. Waste their time. Blockade everything. As Trump tears down the world around him in order to build his own from the wreckage, resistance will necessarily take shape first in spontaneous and audacious refusals. That which cannot be stomached, that which weighs too heavily, that which becomes in too many ways too much will be the gasoline for the fires to come. Pure negativity will be the initial attractor that draws us onto the streets, urgently gathering together beneath banners emblazoned simply with the word "NO."

2. In collective acts of refusal, opportunities will arise to find in one another something which is not yet present but could be.

Behind burning barricades, in occupied lecture halls, on blocked highways, at shut-down airport terminals, in riotous street parties, at lock-downed bank entrances, in striking ports, online and on the streets and, for some, in jail cells, people will one by one accumulate and aggregate into something else, something otherwise. Even the best of friends will be met again as if for the first time, encountered anew within the tumult and turbulence of a multiplicity of struggles. Acts of negation will establish the conditions of possibility for new forms of affirmation, and every opportunity to refuse Trump will also be an opportunity to discover in each other the possibility of becoming a force together.

3. Our resistance will require the playful invention of new repertoires, always differentially improvised in concert with others.

Every practice enacted in the present will require wildly speculative adaptation, elaboration, and experimentation. A march, an occupation, a blockade, and an infinite number of other techniques known and unknown, will all necessitate continuous reinvention as power responds, refashions, and reorganizes itself. The opportunity to put something new into practice must be cultivated, prepared for, and proliferated across complex, diverse, and inconsistent coalitions, alliances, conspiracies, and crowds. Resisting Trump will require new forms of choreography that set into motion destituent and constituent forces, maneuvering, defending, and attacking, tearing apart as they assemble. The only question that should preoccupy us in this moment is not the

singular "What is to be done?" but rather the always multiple and shifting "What works?"

4. Success will depend on an ability to take cues from those who are already most affected by power.

Power is most intimately known by those who have lived their lives beneath it, and this intimacy will be what will orient, navigate, and guide us through the coming struggles. A constellation composed of the memories of Ferguson and Stonewall, of Standing Rock and Zuccotti Park, of Oscar Grant and Tamir Rice, among a great many others, can also be a map that reveals potential routes through the present catastrophe. Those who have historically been most affected by power will be most familiar with the character, complexities, and challenges of the fights to come.

5. Differentiating between companions and collaborators will simply be a matter of observing who refuses alongside you.

The present makes accomplices of us all. The only remaining thing to be settled is who you will choose to be an accomplice to. As lines of riot police and make-shift barricades cut the world into a billion different sides, which one will you stand on? Failing to chose is to have the choice made for you by whatever power presently governs, and complicity threatens to follow from anything but a total rejection of the powerful. Ultimately, a line will be drawn between those who currently (or seek to) govern, and those who desire to be and insist upon being ungovernable.

6. Resistance, like life, will be defined by moments of indescribable joy and tremendous despair.

In the fray of the coming confrontations, inspiration will flow from the courage of those close to us and exhilaration will accompany any victories that follow. However, these will emerge alongside the loud knock at the front door late at night, the swing of the police club, the spinning tear gas canister, the burst of pepper spray, the gliding bullet, the cold jail cell, and the felt absence of lost friends. Neither joy nor despair will wholly define resistance, but rather resistance will depend upon the capacity to experience these things together, to be moved collectively by both joy and despair.

7. Our endurance as a force will rely on refiguring the limits of our responsibility and ability to respond to one another.

Capitalism, as a system, ceaselessly encroaches upon every atom of the world to ensure that survival is only possible on its own terms to the point where the possibility of life itself is called into question. Interrupting this process won't depend on any brilliant maneuver or tactical success as much as it will on our ability to redefine the limits of care and compassion, to reimagine the form and distribution of our interdependencies so we can move towards a world in which it may be possible to endure differently. In the coming years, our solidarity must become a weapon so sharp that it will cut straight through cages, borders, and walls, seeing in variably distant and different others the possibility of survival.

8. As everything is increasingly occupied, refused, and blockaded, the time will quickly arrive to produce the infrastructure for the otherwise.

Whenever and wherever power crumbles, there will always be forces anxious to replace what has been demolished. Power can never finally be destroyed, but can only be indefinitely warded off by insistent and persistent refusal. Resistance, undertaken as a practice, understands that power must be defeated continuously if anything different has a chance of emerging. The infrastructure of the otherwise, that which could lead us towards a time and place unlike the present, is not something we build but is something we enact in consistent and patient repetition.

9. The crisis has already arrived, and whoever is best able to shape the chaos that ensues will produce what has yet to arrive.

*There is no going back, no way to retreat onto solid ground, no possibility of rolling back time, except perhaps while dreaming. The sheer entropy of the present means that there is little to hold **on to**, but it also means that it has become possible to speculate more radically than ever before. Watching the world around us rise and fall at an accelerating rate, those who prevail will be those who grasp the risks worth taking, those who are able to clearly and vividly see the world as it exists and as it can exist. What will come is in no way determined, but will depend on a series of leaps that produce their own ground to land upon.*

10. The greatest virtue of our resistance is that it is entirely absent of any promises and guarantees.

Never trust anyone who tells you about "the future" in the singular. The most powerful in the world expend all of their energy to maintain even the faintest appearance of order, and even the most extremely regulated and controlled corners of the world are constantly threatened by the arrival of any number of unknown, improbable but possible futures. Hope in the present arises from the insight that the unknowability of futurity is perpetual and ineradicable. To not know precisely where we are headed is to remain open to the possibility of arriving where we couldn't possibly have planned to, and in refusing the present we also invite what cannot presently exist within it.

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